

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 319 760

TM 014 941

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TITLE Conceptual Changes and Their Implications for Performance Assessment. Recent Developments in Methodology for Administrator Assessment Centers.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1990).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Evaluation; Concept Formation; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Methods; Evaluators; Instructional Leadership; *Performance; *Principals; School Administration; Scoring; *Simulation; Test Construction
IDENTIFIERS *Performance Analysis

ABSTRACT

Theory and implications for methods of assessing administrative performance in simulated exercises are presented. The rationale is given for the following: (1) developing simulated exercises; (2) measuring behaviors exhibited during the exercises; (3) training evaluators; (4) combining information across exercises; and (5) storing and retrieving specific information on both dimensions and behavioral descriptors to facilitate research. Procedures developed by the Center for Assessment of Administrative Performance to assess and report on the abilities and skills of educational administrators are described. The procedures allow results to be used for diagnostic purposes as well as for selection. Exercises developed by the Center in 1986 and 1987 and field tested with 35 principals and interns included three exercises to assess specified characteristics, abilities, and skills of principals: instructional analysis; in-basket items; and case studies. In 1987 and 1988, three additional exercises were developed and similarly tested: conflict resolution; selection and interviewing; and leaderless group discussion. Current uses of the exercises involve having each participant respond to the six exercises over 2 days. Scoring requires 18 to 24 evaluators using developed scoring guides. Group and individual score reports can be generated, making a variety of comparisons possible. Three appendices provide information about the assessment instruments. (SLD)

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CONCEPTUAL CHANGES & THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

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**"RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN METHODOLOGY
FOR ADMINISTRATOR ASSESSMENT CENTERS"**

"Conceptual Changes and Their Implications for Performance Assessment"
Dale L. Bolton, University of Washington

Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to present theory and implications of innovative and efficient methods for assessing administrative performance in simulated exercises. I will present a description of and rationale for new procedures that have been developed to improve the operation and efficiency of assessment centers for administrators.

The rationale will be explained for: (a) developing simulated exercises, (b) measuring behaviors exhibited during the exercises, (c) training assessors, (d) combining information across exercises, and (e) storing and retrieving specific information on both dimensions and behavioral descriptors in order to facilitate research.

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that principals are especially significant as promoters of effective schools. In the next few years, many new principals will be selected; others will receive additional training. Yet our methods for selecting principals and our basis for designing training programs have not been improved. Assessment centers have been designed to improve the information bases for both selection and training.

Situational tests have been developed over the past forty-five years to measure certain characteristics, abilities, and skills in simulated situations. During this time, the realism and quality of exercises have improved. However, the assessment procedures generally are dependent on methods developed in the 1940s that are very labor intensive and which require extensive training of assessors.

During the past five years, the following innovative and efficient methods have been developed to assess and report on the abilities and skills of educational administrators.

- a. Assessors are specialists in one exercise; they are not required to observe and synthesize information from a variety of exercises. Therefore they can be trained more efficiently.
- b. A predetermined method for summarizing information from multiple exercises is used, rather than a post-exercise consensus activity.
- c. Reports are generated via microcomputers rather than by individuals or groups.
- d. A system allows measures of individuals' behaviors to be cumulated to generate group reports.

- e. A method for scoring both dimensions and behavioral descriptors facilitates both short- and long-term research.

Developing simulated exercises

Because our focus was on assessing performance of principals in simulated situations, our initial task was to determine the characteristics, skills, and abilities that are either required or highly desired by principals. Once this was determined, it was necessary to develop the simulated situations that would allow us to measure these characteristics. Finally, we needed to determine procedures to prepare written and oral reports to participants.

Our initial task involved a review of the literature concerning effective principals, tasks to be accomplished by principals, and dimensions to be considered for assessment. This was followed by a survey of school districts in the State of Washington. The results of the survey provided a ranking of the 24 "dimensions" [see Appendix A] critical to the school principalship. An analysis of these data indicated that these 24 dimensions were ranked approximately the same by administrators at all levels throughout various regions of the state.

Our examination of the highest ranked dimensions indicated that some of them would be very difficult to measure in simulated situations, e.g., **Integrity**, ranked number 5 in importance. However, we consciously attempted to develop procedures for measuring the dimensions considered most important. In the process of developing exercises, we eventually limited our measurement to 12 dimensions, listed in Appendix B.

Concurrently with this initial task, we were involved with a review of the literature concerning criteria, standards, and procedures used in the evaluation of teachers. This literature was compiled and stored for retrieval in relation to instructional analysis skills, and was used by a task force for developing simulation exercises for measuring instructional leadership skills.

In 1986 and 1987, the Center developed and field tested three exercises [procedures and materials] designed to assess specified characteristics, abilities, and skills of current and potential principals. All exercises were developed by task forces of approximately 12-15 people, representing mostly practicing principals -- but including central office personnel, superintendents, professors, and representatives of business and industry.

The exercises developed during these two years included **Instructional Analysis**, **In-basket items**, and **Case Studies**; these exercises were used to measure skills such as problem analysis, ability to evaluate and conduct teacher conferences, and decisiveness. During four one-day sessions, the exercises were field tested in four regions of the state by administering them to 35 people comprised of principals, assistant principals, and interns.

In 1987-88 three additional exercises were developed [**Conflict Resolution, Selection/Interviewing, and Leaderless Group Discussion**] for measuring skills not measured in the first three exercises. Our selection of exercises was done on the basis of our initial survey of the literature and the analysis of tasks done by principals. We wanted to provide exercises involving tasks that were broadly done [and thereby provide high face validity for the assessment process] while at the same time measuring as many of the dimensions as possible.

The exercises involve written responses to written stimulus materials, interaction in a small group, and role play of conferences and interviews. Role players are trained to play their roles consistently across episodes.

Measuring behaviors exhibited during the exercises

Scoring of the Center for Assessment of Administrative Performance's exercises departs radically from normal assessment center procedures. Instead of having all assessors reach consensus concerning measurement following the completion of the exercises, each assessor is responsible for measuring single exercises, and scores are combined on the basis of a pre-determined strategy. Results are input to a computer program and a microcomputer generates a detailed report for each participant.

This means that a participant will respond to six exercises over a two-day period, responses will be scored by six sets of trained assessors [one set of assessors for each exercise] during a one-day period, and then the written reports will be generated from the data input. The written reports are accompanied by an oral interpretation; this allows participants to discuss the report and ask questions concerning its meaning and implications. This feedback session designed to assist the participant interpret the results takes approximately one hour. With the procedures developed, the assessment, scoring, and a written report are able to be completed within one week.

Individual reports are confidential, and results are not released without the consent of the individual assessed. Where results are being used for selection purposes, the individual knows that this is a part of the selection process and releases the results to the school district.

Training assessors

In general, the scoring of the six exercises requires 18-24 assessors on the day following the assessment. The initial assessors were members of the task forces that developed the materials, so they were thoroughly familiar with the exercise materials. However, in addition to the stimulus and response materials developed for the exercises, it was necessary to develop scoring guides with rather specific cues to be observed. Once the scoring guides were developed, assessors were trained in their use. Protocol materials were developed and assessors were trained until substantial agreement was reached on how scores were to be assigned. Generally, new assessors are now trained during the day of assessment by working alongside trained assessors.

Scaling for the scoring is mostly dichotomous [0-1, indicating that something either exists or does not], but some of the exercises have a four point continuous scale [0-3], where each point on the scale is anchored to information to be observed.

Combining information across exercises

Each of the exercises provides response information which is used to provide two types of scores: [a] for *dimensions*, and [b] for *descriptors*. Each *dimension* has from seven to nineteen behavioral *descriptors* that are measured. Measures from several exercises are combined to yield a score on each of the *descriptors* and then the *descriptor* scores are combined to yield a score on the *dimension*. *Dimension* scores are translated to verbal descriptors of **Exceptional Performance, Effective Performance or Strong Potential for Improvement**. *Descriptor* scores are provided on specific behaviors that indicate high performance and those behaviors demonstrating difficulty of performance.

In addition to information concerning dimensions and descriptors, information is combined to give scores on the parts of two of the exercises: [a] instructional analysis, and [b] selection/interview. This means that analogous scores can be obtained for the four parts of the instructional analysis exercise and the three parts of the selection/interview. As with the dimensions, scores are translated to three verbal descriptors and exceptional behaviors are described.

It should be noted at this point that the results are reported as absolute standards rather than in relative terms. At no time did we consider that normed data would be more beneficial to either individuals or school districts than absolute performance. Likewise, when results are reported to school districts for selection purposes, no total score or judgment is made concerning performance; neither is a ranking of the applicants provided. This allows the local organizations to weight the information according to their own priorities or criteria.

Storing and retrieving information to facilitate research

Data are stored on microcomputer discs. Because of the nature of the data, group reports can be generated in the same manner that individual reports are generated. This means that a school district can acquire a group report that would indicate strengths and weaknesses of a given group of principals or applicants.

Data are being collected on personal background of individuals being assessed. This means that the data bank can be disaggregated by sex, age, experience, size of district, level of school, and size of school. Scores can be provided on each of the twelve *dimensions* as well as each of the 140 *descriptors*. [Appendix C provides a listing of the number of measures for each dimension, by exercise.] This means that comparisons can be made on any of the measures available on the disaggregated data. For example, we will be able to determine whether experienced people perform better than people with less experience -- and on what dimensions and what descriptors within the dimensions. The data bank

provides a rich source of information to describe groups.

One such set of groups which lends itself to description is defined by source of training. Recently, the State Department of Instruction expressed interest in examining how well different training programs in the state are doing. The Center is now in the process of assessing groups of principal interns in the latter part of their training programs in order to provide group reports to universities.

In addition to being able to make comparisons among groups at a given time, the data provides the opportunity to make comparisons over time. School districts or training institutions can observe weaknesses, provide treatments to reduce weaknesses, and then check to see if the training procedures are effective.

Summary

The Center for Assessment of Administrative Performance has developed procedures differing dramatically from prior assessment center procedures. The procedures allow results to be used for diagnostic purposes as well as for selection purposes. The labor intensity for assessors is decreased and they are required to score only one exercise, the necessity for post-exercise consensus in order to summarize data across exercises is eliminated, reports are generated via microcomputer rather than by a more laborious hand-written or dictation process, and local school districts are allowed to weight information according to their own priorities of criteria. Of considerable importance is the fact that group reports can be generated in the same manner as individual reports. This allows comparisons to be made accross time as well as across groups. It also allows school districts and training institutions to gather data on the effectiveness of their training programs.

The data base and the procedures benefits local school districts in the selection of vacated or new positions and in diagnosis of skills of veteran administrators; it also benefits state professional organizations and policy makers in departments of education to establish policy concerning recruitment, selection, and training needs. Overall, the procedures developed offer considerable potential for increasing our knowledge base concerning performance of administrators.

APPENDIX A

CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE
RANK AND MEAN OF 24 DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERFORMANCE

Mean Rank

- 4.33* 1 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP, CLASSROOM SUPERVISION - Understands the instructional process and is well versed in a variety of instructional techniques. Is able to evaluate classroom instruction relative to teacher objectives and student performance and is able to work effectively with teachers to improve instruction.
- 4.22 2 LEADERSHIP - Involves others in solving problems; recognizes when a group requires direction; interacts with groups effectively; sets goals and guides others to accomplish tasks; utilizes appropriate interpersonal styles; and performs consistently over time.
- 3.76 3 SENSITIVITY, HUMAN RELATIONS COMPETENCE - Perceives the needs, concerns, and personal problems of others; resolves conflicts; tactfully deals with individuals from varying backgrounds; effectively deals with people and emotional issues; knows which information to share and with whom.
- 3.75 4 JUDGMENT Reaches logical conclusions and makes high quality decisions based on available information; exercises skill in identifying educational needs and setting priorities; critically evaluates written communications.
- 3.66 5 INTEGRITY - Maintains social, ethical and organizational norms in job-related activities.
- 3.42 6 PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION - Judges and predicts behaviors of people in light of organizational needs; designs activities for the improvement of personnel within the organization; and demonstrates human relations skill and ability to resolve conflicts.
- 3.38 7 ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY - Plans and schedules the work of others; optimally uses resources; schedules own work and time effectively; when planning, considers constraints such as societal and governmental factors.
- 3.32 8 EDUCATIONAL VALUES - Possesses a well-reasoned educational philosophy; receptive to new ideas and change; and is interested in students. Sets high performance goals and standards for self, subordinates, students, and the organization and is dissatisfied with average performance. Has a clear perspective of the role of education in society.

*Dimensions were rank ordered by school administrators across the state on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most important in the selection of school principals.

- 3.31 9 PERSONAL MOTIVATION, ENERGY, AMBITION** - Actively attempts to influence events to achieve goals; considers work important to personal satisfaction; evaluates own work. Initiates activities rather than merely reacts to situations; takes action beyond minimal requirements. Maintains a high energy level. Consistently follows through on assigned tasks. Develops and follows professional growth plans for self.
- 3.25 10 CREATIVE, RISK TAKER, INNOVATIVE** - Generates and recognizes innovative solutions in work-related situations. Exhibits openness to new ideas from others; demonstrates originality in developing policies and procedures.
- 3.20 11 DECISIVENESS** - Recognizes the need for a decision and acts quickly. Makes decisions, renders judgments, takes action, and accepts responsibility for actions and consequences.
- 3.17 12 ORAL COMMUNICATION** - Clearly presents facts and ideas orally in individual and group situations; communication is both precise and concise; uses language that is appropriate to the person or group.
- 3.06 13 PERSONALITY, CHARISMA, IMPACT, PROJECTION** - Makes a positive impact in all types of situations. Has a sense of vision and is able to project that sense. Has ability to be a teacher, trainer, coach and cheerleader. Exhibits confidence in self.
- 3.02 14 STRESS TOLERANCE, FLEXIBILITY** - Performs under pressure and during opposition; thinks well during oral interchange; maintains effectiveness in varying environments with various tasks, responsibilities, and people; exhibits behavior flexibility; adjusts time schedule as need arises; and has tolerance for ambiguity.
- 2.87 15 DEVELOPMENT OF SUBORDINATES** - Develops the skills and competencies of subordinates through training and development activities related to current and future jobs.
- 2.86 16 CONTROL** - Establishes procedures to monitor and regulate the activities and responsibilities of subordinates. Monitors the progress of delegated assignments and makes appropriate adjustments. Uses power properly.
- 2.79 17 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION** - Expresses ideas concisely and precisely in writing; writes effectively for various audiences, e.g., students, teachers, parents.
- 2.78 18 PROBLEM ANALYSIS** - Seeks and analyzes relevant and complex information to determine the important elements of a problem; uses information to distinguish significance of problems; uses appropriate decision-making processes.

- 2.65 19 SELF-EVALUATION - Accepts criticism and identifies personal growth areas.
- 2.57 20 USE OF DELEGATION - Utilizes subordinates effectively; allocates decision-making and other responsibilities to the appropriate subordinates.
- 2.50 21 TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE - Understands and applies relevant technical and professional information; assimilates and applies new job-related information taking into consideration complexity of the situation.
- 2.25 22 EXTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY - Uses knowledge of changing situations and governmental pressures outside the organization to identify potential organizational problems and opportunities. Actions are based on an awareness of the impact and implication of decisions relevant to societal and governmental factors.
- 2.25 23 TENACITY - Stays with a position or plan of action until the desired objective is achieved or is no longer reasonably attainable; handles disappointment and/or rejection while maintaining effectiveness.
- 1.76 24 RANGE OF INTEREST - Competently discusses a variety of subjects, e.g., education, politics, economics, current events; exhibits desire to participate actively in events.

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APPENDIX B

CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE
DIMENSIONS TO BE ASSESSEDCREATIVITY

Generates and recognizes innovative solutions in work-related situations; exhibits openness to new ideas from others; demonstrates originality in developing policies and procedures; performs under pressure and during opposition; thinks well during oral interchange; maintains effectiveness in varying environments with various tasks, responsibilities, and people; exhibits behavior flexibility; adjusts time schedule as need arises; and has tolerance for ambiguity.

DECISIVENESS

Recognizes the need for a decision and is willing to act quickly; is willing to make decisions, render judgments, take action, and accept responsibility for actions and consequences.

EDUCATIONAL VALUES

Possesses a well-reasoned educational philosophy; places high priority on needs and welfare of students; receptive to new ideas and change, yet understands need for stability in schools and society; sets high performance goals and standards for self, subordinates, students, and the organization and is dissatisfied with average performance; has a clear perspective of the role of education in society.

GROUP LEADERSHIP

Possesses a sense of vision and projects that sense; exhibits confidence in self; involves others in accomplishing goals and solving problems; recognizes when a group requires direction; interacts with groups effectively; sets goals and guides others to accomplish tasks; utilizes appropriate interpersonal styles; maintains a high energy level; makes a positive impact and performs consistently over time.

HUMAN RELATIONS COMPETENCE

Perceives the needs, concerns and personal problems of others; recognizes conflicts; tactfully deals with individuals from varying backgrounds; effectively deals with people and emotional issues; knows which information to share and with whom.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP, SUPERVISION

Understands the instructional process and is well versed in a variety of instructional techniques; evaluates classroom instruction relative to teacher objectives and student performance; and works effectively with teachers to improve instruction.

JUDGMENT

Reaches logical conclusions and makes high quality decisions based on available and acquired information; exercises skill in identifying educational needs and setting priorities; critically evaluates written communications.

ORAL COMMUNICATION

Clearly presents facts and ideas orally in individual and group situations; communication is both precise and concise; uses language that is appropriate to the person or group.

ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY

Plans and organizes prior to an event; plans and schedules the work of others; optimally uses resources; schedules own work and time effectively; when planning, considers constraints such as societal and governmental factors; consistently follows through on assigned tasks.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Seeks and analyzes relevant and complex information to determine the important elements of a problem; uses information to distinguish significance of problems; uses appropriate analytical and group processes to solve problems.

RESOURCEFULNESS

Actively attempts to influence events to achieve goals; considers work important to personal satisfaction; evaluates own work. Initiates activities rather than merely reacts to situations; takes action beyond minimal requirements; maintains a high energy level; develops and follows professional growth plans for self.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Expresses ideas concisely and precisely in writing; writes effectively for various audiences, e.g., students, teachers, parents.

Appendix C

CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

NUMBER OF MEASURES FOR EACH DIMENSION, BY EXERCISE

DIMENSION	EXERCISE *							
	IA	IB	CAS	GD	S/I	CR	TM	DES
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP, SUPERVISION	30		5		1	6	42	19
HUMAN RELATIONS COMPETENCE	18	9	21	5	6	15	74	14
JUDGMENT	9	11	23	1	3	8	55	13
ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY	3	2	21	5	7	13	51	15
EDUCATIONAL VALUES	11	4	31	6	8	12	72	11
ORAL COMMUNICATION	9		1	7	10	10	37	12
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION	7	6	37	1	6	7	64	10
PROBLEM ANALYSIS	7	16	19	3		10	55	10
CREATIVITY	3	4	8	4		4	23	12
DECISIVENESS	3	5	8		2	6	24	7
GROUP LEADERSHIP			15	8		3	26	8
RESOURCEFULNESS	4		13	3	3	5	28	9
<u>TOTAL</u>	104	57	202	43	46	99	551	140

- * IA = Instructional Analysis exercise
 IB = In-Basket exercise
 CAS = Cases exercise
 GD = Group Discussion exercise
 S/I = Selection/Interview exercise
 CR = Conflict Resolution exercise
 TM = Total Measures
 DES = Descriptors